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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI SECURITY SERVICES ARREST "JEWISH TERRORIST"

Classified By: DCM Luis G. Moreno, reasons 1.4 (b),(d)

11. (C) Summary: Israeli security services announced October 31 that they had arrested an American-born settler in connection to a number of crimes and terrorist attacks over the past 12 years. Yaacov "Jack" Teitel was arrested on October 7 for posting anti-homosexual flyers, and later confessed to a number of crimes, including the murder of two Palestinians in 1997 and several attempted bombings, including placing a bomb that injured Israel Prize laureate Prof. Zeev Sternhall in September 2008. According to Legat sources, Israeli authorities have yet to corroborate Teitel's confessions, but described the investigation as the most significant one conducted by the Shin Bet Jewish extremist unit since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. While GOI officials praised the Israeli security services' investigation, Israeli media outlets largely questioned whether the security services are sufficiently motivated or resourced to conduct investigations on Jewish terrorists. End summary.

12. (U) The Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) and the Israel Police announced on October 31 that they had arrested an American-born settler -- Yaacov "Jack" Teitel -- who was allegedly behind a number of terrorist shootings and bombings spanning the last 12 years (CONS is reporting arrest septel). Teitel, who lives in the settlement of Shvut Rahel in the West Bank, was arrested on October 7 by an Israeli police elite counterterrorism unit in Jerusalem while posting flyers in support of the August 1 attack on a gay and lesbian youth club in Tel Aviv. Following the arrest, Teitel confessed to authorities that he was responsible for a number of incidents, including:

- Murdering east Jerusalem taxi driver Samir Balbisi in June 1997;
- Murdering a Palestinian shepherd south of Mount Hebron in August 1997;
- Placing an explosive device in a police station in Eli, a settlement located adjacent to Ramallah, in 2006 (the device was found and disarmed safely);
- Placing an explosive device in the Beit Jamal Monastery near Beit Shemesh in 2007 (a Palestinian driving a tractor was injured in the attack);
- Placing an explosive device in Jerusalem's Ramot neighborhood in 2007 (severely damaging a police cruiser);
- Hurling explosives at a police car in June 2007;
- Sending a parcel bomb to a Messianic Jewish family residing in the West Bank settlement of Ariel in March 2008 (severely injuring an Israeli-American 15 year-old boy); and
- Planting a pipe bomb near Israel Prize laureate Prof. Zeev Sternhall's Jerusalem home in September 2008 (lightly wounding Sternhall).

13. (C) Teitel also claimed responsibility for the August 1 shooting attack on the gay and lesbian youth center in Tel Aviv in which two people were killed and 15 injured, but then later recanted. Shin Bet informed Legat that they have identified an alibi for Teitel, and have subsequently ruled him out of the attack on the youth center. According to Legat, neither Shin Bet nor the FBI has been able to

corroborate Teitel's confessions. Legat notes close cooperation with Shin Bet over the past year, including specifically the last 90 days on the Teitel case. Shin Bet notified Legat that this was the most significant investigation conducted by its Jewish extremist unit since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

¶4. (U) According to Israeli press, a search of Teitel's home in Shvut Rahel uncovered a large weapons cache, including a sniper rifle, an M15 machine gun, an M16 shortened automatic rifle, a Glock handgun, and a Browning 9mm handgun. Media outlets report that Teitel had smuggled the hand gun used to kill the two Palestinians in 1997 in the hold of a British Airways flight. This gun has not been located by police, although Teitel claimed to have hidden the gun near the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. According to the press, Teitel smuggled his other weapons in a container through the port of Ashdod that he was entitled to bring when he immigrated to Israel in 2000.

¶5. (U) Israeli security services note that Teitel acted alone in these attacks, which was one of the reasons why the investigation proved so difficult. They describe Teitel as a meticulous and sane individual acting in support of an extreme ideology that opposes Palestinians, homosexuals, and Messianic Jews. Following the murder of the two Palestinians in 1997, Teitel fled to the United States for several years before returning to Israel in 2000. Israeli media notes that Florida resident Teitel was known to U.S. authorities for his alleged involvement in violent crimes in the United States. According to an attorney who represented Teitel in 2000, Teitel was arrested upon his return to Israel on suspicion of

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the murders of the two Palestinians, but was subsequently released after police could not build a case against him. Teitel's current attorney is attempting to make the case that Teitel is mentally unstable, given the fact that he has implicated himself in crimes that he did not commit.

¶6. (U) While GOI officials praised the work of Shin Bet and the Israeli police, Israeli media outlets largely criticized the security services for failing to apprehend Teitel sooner. Independent centrist Israeli newspapers Yedioth Ahronoth and Ma'ariv raise questions whether Israeli security services -- which excel at collecting information on Arab terrorists -- are sufficiently motivated or resourced to conduct investigations on Jewish terrorists. Other media sources question how Teitel's small settlement community could not have been aware of his activities. The Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the West Bank distanced itself from Teitel, while other settlers and right-wing activists described Teitel as a "lone gunman" who does not represent the community to which he claimed to belong.

¶7. (C) Legat sources note that Prime Minister Netanyahu had been briefed on Teitel's arrest, and updated daily on Shin Bet's investigation. Speaking to the Israeli press, Netanyahu said he had Teitel in mind when he prepared some of his remarks to the Knesset on the anniversary of Rabin's assassination: "There still exist among us a minority that is not willing to accept democratic decisions or the supremacy of law... they constitute a small marginal minority. We have already seen the power and the harm caused by one murderer. We must denounce the use of violence and use the full weight of law enforcement to prevent the use of such violence."

¶8. (U) In response to the announcement of Teitel's arrest, opposition leader and Kadima Chair Tzipi Livni argued in favor of education against hate crimes. Prof. Sternhall praised Teitel's arrest, claiming it was an "important day for Israeli democracy." He expressed the hope that the Israeli authorities would "deal with this terrorist as it does any other terrorist -- Jewish or Arab."

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